TELLS THE FACTS AND NAMES THE NAMES

CounterPunch

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The Epics of Amazonia

By Alexander Cockburn

John Hemming: *Tree of Rivers. The Story of the Amazon.* Thames & Hudson. 2008, 368pp.

Few flying over the Amazon basin the first time are prepared for the unchanging vistas of forest receding to the horizon, hour after hour, seemingly a rebuttal to headlines about the vanishing rainforest. I often get the same reaction from visitors in northern California driving up Highway 101 through Douglas fir forests and the occasional redwood grove, mile upon mile. But just as in California the "beauty strip" on either side of the road often conceals desolate stretches of stumps amid dispirited second-growth saplings, so too that first glimpse of Amazonia affords false comfort. A single road, a thread lying on a billiard table, can means disease and extinction for a dozen Indian tribes, plus uncounted other species. In three or four years, a corporate cattle ranch can reduce primeval forest to a degraded pasture and washed out soils. With miners comes mercury in the rivers, poisoned fish. Since Europeans first came to the Amazon half a millennium ago, the leitmotif has always been destruction.

It would be hard to find someone better qualified than John Hemming to evoke both the natural splendor and biological complexity of Amazonia and the impact of the white man and his technology, from the knife blades that so entranced the Indians, to the chains that linked them as slaves under the horrified eyes of Roger Casement and others, to the D-9 bulldozers of today chewing up the rainforest for soybean plantations. With a shelf full of distinguished books and papers on the Amazon, this for-

COCKBURN CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

The Story of a 15 - Year Pentagon Cover-Up
The Murder of Colonel Sabow

By James G. Abourezk

On January 22, 1991, the wife of Marine Corps Col. James Sabow found him shot dead in the backyard of their base housing unit at the Marine Corps Air Station at El Toro, California. Naval Investigators sent to the death scene immediately pronounced his death a suicide and just as quickly notified Dr. David Sabow, the Colonel's brother, of their conclusion.

Any nonprofessional taking a first look at the scene could easily come to that same conclusion. Col. Sabow's body, in pajamas and bathrobe, was found lying on his right side, with a lawn chair perched on top of his body. The shotgun that caused his death was lying under his body. But these were not amateur investigators. The Navy had sent professional crime scene investigators to inquire into the death of Col. Sabow, but what these professionals overlooked – whether deliberately or through incompetence – was evidence that Col. Sabow had been bludgeoned, after which a shotgun was placed in his mouth by the killers, who pulled the shotgun's trigger, then arranged the body to make it look like a suicide. Dr. Sabow conducted his own investigation and found from the autopsy records evidence of a massive skull fracture over the right ear, clearly showing that his brother had been clubbed over the head, following which the scene was arranged to make it look like a suicide. Dr. Sabow shared much of the critical autopsy findings with competent university medical experts who came to the same conclusion.

This more accurate evidence, as well as additional findings and the conclusions that followed, all came together fifteen years later, in 2005, when Dr. David Sabow ultimately hired a forensic scientist to re-examine the crime scene and the evidence. What spurred Dr. Sabow's hiring of Bryan Burnett, the independent forensic scientist, was the issuance of a newly written report by Dr. Jon Nordby, who had been hired by the Pentagon under a mandate from Congress to re-investigate the killing.

Nordby's investigation changed nothing from the government's point of view, only confirming the earlier Pentagon conclusion that, in the face of all evidence to the contrary, Col. Sabow's death was suicide. However, using modern scientific methods to re-enact what had actually happened, Burnett concluded that, without question, Col. Sabow, indeed, had been murdered. Burnett also concluded from the crime scene evidence that at least three people were involved in the murder. These are conclusions the Pentagon has been desperately trying to avoid ever since Col. Sabow's death.

Colonel James Sabow was a veteran Marine Corps pilot who had survived over 200 combat missions during the Vietnam War, earning a Bronze Star for valor. The colonel's brother, Dr. David Sabow, is a neurologist who has practiced medicine in Rapid City, South Dakota, for the last 25 years. As the Pentagon has learned the hard way, he is someone who is not easily deterred.

In his third year in college in 1961, Dr. Sabow was injured in a water-skiing accident which rendered him a total quadriplegic. Since then, with a partial recovery of some of his motor functions, he is now able to move around in a motorized wheelchair, which he has learned to navigate with seemingly great ease.

Since that day in January 1991, when the Naval investigators called to tell him his brother committed suicide, Dr. Sabow has spent many of his waking moments

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mer director of the Royal Geographical Society reassures his readers, without conceit, that he really knows what he is talking about. Describing the great English mid-nineteenth century botanist Richard Spruce's terror of getting lost, "even when not far from salvation", Hemming comments, "Getting lost is one of the few fatal dangers in this environment. I have also experienced the panic of finding myself alone and disoriented in unexplored forests, far further from help than Spruce was at that time, knowing that if I continued in the wrong direction I would never survive."

In pleasantly paced chapters, Hemming guides us expertly through the historical as well as the physical landscape. The rubber boom, famously symbolized by the opera house in Manaus, is a rite of passage for everyone writing the Amazon's history, but Hemming brings freshness to the topic, not least in his humorous demolition of the myths promoted by Henry Wickham, on how he engineered the export of the seeds of *Hevea brasiliensis* – the wild rubber tree – for germination at Kew for British plantations in Ceylon and Malaya. Wickham spun a fanciful legend of smuggling the seeds on a leased river steamer under the noses of the vigilant Brazilian authorities, zealous to protect their resource. All nonsense. Wickham's supposed smuggling was probably legal and the Brazilians complaisant at the time about the export, though ever since they have howled about Wickham as "the Prince of Smugglers". Anyway, their own theft in 1727 of the seeds of *Coffea arabica* from the French colony of Cayenne sponsored Brazil's largest export to this day, "greater and more enduring than rubber", as Hemming points out.

The rubber plantations flourished in Asia, and the great wild rubber boom spluttered to an end. Hemming remarks,

Wickham spun a fanciful legend of smuggling the rubber seeds on a leased river steamer under the noses of the vigilant Brazilian authorities. All nonsense.

apropos the opera house, "Abandoned for decades, the theater has recently been lovingly restored, even down to belle époque lettering and decorations. The author saw an operatic intermezzo by Telemann staged there, but this had a cast of only three singers and a dozen musicians." Tourists often rush to rather dreary Manaus to savor the historical aroma of the boom, but they would be better advised to stay in the pleasant city of Belem, at the mouth of the Amazon, which has plenty of Portuguese colonial history and wonderful food besides.

Hemming does not spare us the violence with which the region has always been drenched, from the appalling cruelties of the Cabanagem – an uprising of the early 1830s by Indians and mestizos against the savageries of the colonists – through the rubber boom to the unrelenting exterminations to this day of native tribes. Hypocrisies on this matter were blatant in the 1980s, when the death of the rainforest was a news staple on both sides of the North Atlantic. U.S. congressmen from the Pacific Northwest, whose districts displayed only the tree stumps of ancient forests, and whose grandparents had murdered Indians without remit, lectured Brazilians on how to manage their forests as national parks along North American lines, meaning expulsion of all humans. Hemming emphasizes not only the degree to which Indians like the Kayapo manipulated the supposedly "natural Eden", but also how the vitality of the Amazon's protected forest reserves depends on the social and economic well-being of forest dwellers - Indians, rubber tappers and river folk.

Hemming gives us a manly epic. Women – aside from courtesans in Manaus, prostitutes along the advancing frontier, and the archaeologist Anna Roosevelt - scarcely obtrude in this virile saga. Its most vivid scenes concern the men who most delight the former head of the RGS – explorers and botanists. We meet Charles Waterton, "the first Englishman to write in praise of tropical forests". In his later years he turned his Yorkshire estate "into a wildlife sanctuary full of artificial burrows and nests… [he] liked to dress as a scarecrow and sit in trees" and "launched the world's first successful legal action over environmental pollution, against the owner of a nearby soap-works whose chimneys released noxious chemicals."

Particularly honored by Hemming are extraordinary heroes like Colonel Candido Rondon and the German-born, self-taught anthropologist Curt Nimuendaju, both of whom devoted the substantive portions of their lives to protecting the Amazon's Indian tribes. It was Rondon who coined the famous injunction to troops confronting hostile tribes: "Die if you must, but never kill!" His crowning achievement was the creation of the Indian Protection Service in 1910. Four years later he guided former president Teddy Roosevelt down the River of Doubt.

Most of all, Hemming honors nature in all its overwhelming Amazonian profligacy. His last pages are appropriate homage to the beetle and the ant: In one sense," he concludes in his penultimate paragraph, "ants rule the rain forests. Their biomass is greater than that of all mammals, or birds, or reptiles, even of beetles. Forests are full of fragrant smells, but these are drowned by the smell of rotting vegetation and the rotting reek of formic acid. During the rains, the ants' pungent smell is ever present." **CP**

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gathering evidence to prove something he knew instinctively – that his brother would not have killed himself, and that someone other than his brother had fired the shotgun. His determination to prove that it was murder and not suicide has cost him his life savings, most of his earnings, and, as a final blow, he is now being forced to sell his home nestled in the Black Hills of western South Dakota to pay for the accumulated debts he has incurred over the years. The burden that the case has laid over him and his family is one that is difficult to describe.

Dr. Sabow has lived in nearly perpetual outrage, not only because of the murder itself but also because of the 15-year Pentagon cover-up. Military officials have surpassed themselves in their efforts to deny the charges that Col. Sabow was murdered – denials which have only increased Dr. Sabow's resolve to prove otherwise.

In March of 1991, at the beginning of the investigation, both Dr. Sabow and Col. Sabow's widow, Sally, were warned, with threats of dire sanctions, by General Adams that they should not speak to the news media.

The Murder

The forensic scientist who proved Dr. Sabow's theory of outright murder – Bryan Burnett – studied in minute detail all the evidence gathered at the scene by investigators in the immediate aftermath of Col. Sabow's death, including results of the initial crime scene investigation, the photos taken by the crime scene investigators, Col. Sabow's clothing, the shotgun used in the killing, as well as the pathology report by the Orange County, California, medical examiner.

Burnett's conclusions were definite: without question, Col. Sabow was the victim of a murder, and not of a suicide. Burnett based his report on irrefutable evidence, beginning with firing tests of the shotgun, which clearly showed that it leaked gunshot residue when it was fired.

According to the scenario by the Naval Investigative Service and the Pentagon, Col. Sabow was seated in a patio chair in his backyard. The scene scripted by these two organizations was that Col. Sabow placed the butt of the double-barreled shotgun on the ground next to his right foot with the breech against his right leg. Then, while holding the barrel in his mouth with his left hand, he supposedly reached down to discharge the weapon with his right hand. Because all the tests performed on the gun have proven that it leaked gunshot residue from the breech and the trigger housing, if suicide was the means of his death, then his right hand would contain evidence of gunshot residue. According to tests performed for the government by the Riverside County, California, forensic laboratory, there was no evidence of gunshot residue on Colonel Sabow's right hand. Moreover, in this same situation, gunshot residue would have covered that portion of the pajama leg or that part of the bathrobe that would have been in contact with the breech of the shotgun. All tests prove that there was either no gunshot residue whatsoever, or a minimal amount in these areas.

In layman's terms, Col. Sabow had been clubbed before he was made the target of the shotgun blast.

Significantly, none of the residue was found on Col. Sabow's right hand: the hand which would have pulled the trigger had he committed suicide. Because of the position of the bathrobe, which had been carefully tucked around his legs by the killers, the residue would have shown on the bathrobe but not on the pajamas, which the killers covered by the tucking in the bathrobe. There was a small amount of residue on the pajamas, but it was in areas *under* the bathrobe. Neither the pajamas nor the bathrobe showed levels of gunshot residue, which would confirm that the breech of the shotgun was in contact with the right leg, which it would have been if it were really suicide. Clearly, the shotgun was fired when the breech was away from the body. Further evidence of murder accumulates when Burnett pointed out that a suicide victim does not jump from a sitting position to a fully extended body position. Instead, such a victim would merely slump in the chair after death. What would make such a jump impossible is the immediate destruction of the brain stem from the shotgun blast when all the muscles would become flaccid.

Further, blood spatter that was found on the grass near the body as well as on Col. Sabow's left wrist indicates that the expiration of blood was occurring prior to the shotgun blast. The colonel was bleeding on the grass before the shotgun was fired.

Burnett also found that the bruising of the back of Col. Sabow's head shows the impression of the end of the club used to strike him. He found that the bruising of the right ear and around the eyes is typical of a basilar skull fracture. Col. Sabow had undergone seizures after being clubbed, again, prior to the shotgun blast, as indicated by the lip and tongue injuries detected on his body. Skull X-rays taken at the autopsy were reviewed both by independent neurosurgery and neuroradiology experts, all of whom concluded that Col. Sabow had been struck on the head by a blunt instrument, resulting in a massive depressed fracture. The X-rays from the autopsy report showed that his skull was partially caved in as a result of what was described as "blunt force trauma."

In layman's terms, he had been clubbed before he was made the target of the shotgun blast.

Burnett's analysis is that, after being rendered unconscious by the blow, Colonel Sabow fell on his right side, after which the shotgun was placed in his mouth, fired, and then shoved under his body to simulate suicide. His bathrobe was then carefully but inexplicably tucked around his legs.

The post-mortem examination disclosed another fact – that there was a large amount of blood in Col. Sabow's right lung; solid evidence that he was still alive after being clubbed, but before the shotgun was discharged in his mouth by the killers. Had it been suicide, he would have died instantaneously, and there would have been no inhaling of blood into his lung following death.

According to Burnett's report, the blood spatter both on the grass and on the body is evidence of homicide. He points out that bleeding was occurring prior to the shotgun blast, explained by basilar skull fractures that occurred as a result of the blow to the head. Both expirated and aspirated blood is evident, which would not occur if the death was by shotgun without the prior blunt force injury. Bloody blowback shows up on the

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palm of the left hand (which would not occur if he had committed suicide). And the body position makes no sense if it were suicide. There was no blood on the exterior of the shotgun.

The bathrobe tucks provide evidence of post-mortem manipulation of the body, that is, the killer or killers arranged his body, the shotgun, and straightened out his bathrobe in their effort to stage the scene. All the assembled evidence offers overwhelming verification of homicide, and there is no evidence that supports suicide.

Even more evidence of murder overlooked by the government was the complete absence of fingerprints on the shotgun used in his death, as well as the absence of bloody blowback on the weapon. The absence of blowback indicates that the shotgun either had not been exposed to blowback, or it had been cleaned before being placed under the Colonel's body. It is obvious that a suicide would be unable to wipe a weapon clean. Interestingly, the FBI, when it was asked, has gone on record as saying that fingerprints are rarely found on firearms, which is true in most cases. But what the FBI has omitted in its opinion is that its "rule of thumb" applies generally to pistols and revolvers but not necessarily to shotguns and rifles, which are much more susceptible to retaining fingerprints. Moreover, the FBI has no explanation for the absence of bloody blowback on the shotgun.

The Motive

There is no definite evidence with respect to who the murderer or murderers are. There is only suspicion, and given the government's frenzied efforts to cover up the killing, ultimately finding the guilty party or parties will not be easy.

David Sabow believes that his brother, Col. Sabow, was part of a Marine Corps operation flying weapons to South America as part of the arms-for-drugs operation in the Reagan era, designed to supply the Contras subsidized by the U.S.A. He is also convinced that, not long before his murder, his brother learned of the senior Marine Corps officers who were involved in bringing illegal drugs back into the country.

C-123 cargo planes were geared up so they could fly weapons south to Colombia and to bring back illegal drugs on the return trip to the United States. Once converted, the C-123s were flown to El Toro Marine Air Station, where a senior officer would authorize the planes to be re-fueled at night, and then sent to the Southern Mexico weapons dump to transfer on to Columbia. On the return trip from Columbia, the C-123s brought cocaine back to El Toro, always at night, where the drugs were unloaded.

Tosh Plumlee, one of the civilian pilots running guns for the U.S. government in the 1980s, has told this writer that he made a number of operationally approved trips to Latin America; trips that were described as "sanctioned drug interdiction operations." These trips were approved by military intelligence personnel attached to the Pentagon, with CIA logistical support. They were made in total secrecy to the extent that other government agencies were not aware of the existence of these flights, or of the operation. The pilots were given a specific coded transponder number to squawk so their aircraft would not be challenged by U.S. Customs aircraft when patrolling the U.S. border.

In her statement, Mrs. Sabow accused the Marine Corps and the federal government of engaging in lies and a cover-up in their report in order to hide the murder of her husband.

When, in the 1980s, the 82nd and 101st Airborne were sent to Costa Rica for maneuvers, a great deal of weapons were sent with them. However, some of the weapons did not return to the United States and were later taken off the books by the military, marked as either lost or destroyed and reported to the Government Accounting Office as such.

Plumlee and other pilots have testified to Congress that they were working for a secret U.S. military intelligence operation that clandestinely sent them from the United States to bring back the so-called damaged and disappeared weapons for retrofitting and repair.

When the weapons were repaired and tested at China Lake and Twentynine Palms, in California, they were staged and once again flown back from El Toro Marine Air Base to Latin America, via Mexico, to be supplied to the Contras, the American-financed rebel group seeking to overthrow the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua.

The aircraft used by this group were designated as "cutouts" and certified as belonging to the U.S. Forest Service's aircraft fleet, but they were controlled by U.S. military intelligence, and contracted by civilian operators for whom Plumlee and other pilots worked. These pilots used secret air bases in Costa Rica, as well as on the notorious John Hall Ranch, as unloading and staging areas for the illegal weapons. They also used hidden runways in Costa Rica and El Salvador, controlled by the drug cartel, which then allowed them to bring into the United States drugs on the return trips.

These flyways and airstrips were secretly recorded by undercover flight crews and reported to various government interdiction agencies in the United States. In 1986, an early operation known by the code name, "Penetrate," was shut down because of the politically explosive Iran-Contra matter. In 1990, however, there was still a covert weapons operation – detailed above – that continued to fly weapons to Latin America, mostly to Bogota, Columbia, which allowed the group to bring back illegal drugs into the United States via Mexico. These flyways and staging areas in Mexico were duly noted by undercover pilots and passed on to CIA and DEA personnel. According to Plumlee, an American DEA agent from Guadalajara, Mexico, by the name of Kiki Camarena, was killed because of his knowledge concerning the "CIA-Mexico" thing, as it was widely known among the covert civilian pilots.

Plumlee states that the word being spread from military personnel at El Toro through his group was that Col. Sabow had discovered illegal flights coming into El Toro Marine Air Base at 2 or 3 a.m., obviously carrying illegal contraband, and that he intended to blow the whistle. He had also heard that Col. Sabow was going to be relieved of his duties because of his intention to report the drug shipments.

Plumlee is convinced that Col. Sabow was murdered to silence him.

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It is highly probable that Col. Sabow became aware of the night flights into El Toro, as his base housing was on the landing flight path.

A serious hitch in the operation came when a new loadmaster assigned to El Toro complained about the unregistered planes landing at night and demanded that they be registered, but a senior officer ordered him to shut up and to stop insisting on registration. The loadmaster complained to the inspector general, which prompted the latter to come to El Toro for an investigation.

Dr. Sabow believes the inspector general was making an effort to force the officers under suspicion to resign for the good of the Corps. But because Col. Sabow knew he was clean so far as drug shipments were concerned, instead of quietly accepting the accusations, he planned to insist that a court martial be convened in order to clear his name. He was willing to expose the operation that sent American weapons into Latin America on American cargo aircraft, and he would prove that he had no hand in bringing illegal drugs into the country on return trips.

Sally Sabow, Col. Sabow's wife, has told her brother-in-law that the day before her husband was killed, a senior officer had walked into Col. Sabow's home, and, during a conversation overheard by her, she saw the officer shaking his finger in Col. Sabow's face, shouting, "You will never go to a court martial!"

Sally Sabow has since detailed a chronology of events on the morning of the murder. The phone rang just as she was leaving the house to go to morning Mass. Because of the time Mass was to start, she remembered the time as being 8:30 on that morning, January 22, 1991. The routine of the Sabows' neighbor, Col. Joseph Underwood, was that when he came next door to visit the Sabows, he would call the Sabow home in advance so Col. Sabow's dog, usually in the back yard, could be put into the garage. Underwood's home was next door, their back yards connected by a gate placed in the five-foot privacy fence. Sally Sabow heard the phone ring just as she was leaving the house that morning, and Col. Sabow answered it. She saw him heading for the back door to take the dog into the garage. She says her natural assumption was that it was Col. Underwood calling before he was to visit.

On her return from Mass, she found her husband dead.

What was interesting about the inspector general's actions was that the Marine Corps wanted a quiet resignation from the officers they believed were involved in drug shipments from Central America. There's no doubt that a finding that Col. Sabow committed suicide would serve the interests of the Marine Corps as well as the Pentagon's civilian leaders. If it were murder, it is obvious that too much information would be exposed about the illegal drug operations of the senior Marine Corps officers, which would have been a huge embarrassment for the Marine Corps.

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Col. Sabow, along with Col. Underwood and Marine Corps General Tom Adams, was accused of using Marine airplanes for personal reasons. California newspapers at the time were full of stories about the scandal involving misuse of Marine Corps aircraft: a scandal uncovered as a result of an anonymous phone call to the Marine Corps Fraud Hotline. General Adams was accused, according to a *Los Angeles Times* report by Eric Lichtblau, of using Marine Corps aircraft to fly to Florida to sign his divorce papers, then to spend time at a military resort called "Big Bear" with his girlfriend. Col. Underwood was accused of using aircraft for personal use. Sabow was targeted as having transported personal items in a Marine Corps aircraft to give to his son who was attending school in the Spokane, Washington, area.

The Marine Corps inspector general had relieved both Underwood and Sabow from their duties, pending the disposition of the accusations against them. After Col. Sabow's death, and because the Naval Criminal Investigative Service had pronounced it a suicide, it was widely assumed that the scandal was the cause of his "self-inflicted" mortal wound.

Not according to Col. Sabow's widow, however. Sally Sabow filed an affidavit to counter the speculation that her husband was depressed and that his mental condition had deteriorated – allegations made in a Defense Department report released in an effort to explain his suicide. Instead of being depressed, Mrs. Sabow, who had earned a minor degree in Psychology and who had worked as a social worker in a mental ward after college, said in her sworn statement that her husband was, indeed, of sound mind and, in fact, was working on his resume in the days before his death. She also refuted a statement in the report that, according to her, Col. Sabow had left a suicide note. In her statement, she accused the Marine Corps and the federal government of engaging in lies and a cover-up in their report in

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order to hide the murder of her husband.

Underwood pled guilty at an "Article 15" administrative hearing to a number of the charges, among them misusing both Marine Corps aircraft as well as the misuse of his official car, of using his aides for personal chores, for demanding a kickback from another officer for a prize-winning entry to a base contest he administered, and for taking a laptop computer home for use by his family. Article 15 allows a commander – in this case General Adams – to administer the punishment for violating the Uniform Code of Military Justice. Underwood was fined $4,000 and agreed to make restitution in the amount of $2,300. He also received an official letter of reprimand. He then asked that he be allowed to retire from the Marine Corps; a retirement agreed to by General Adams, which would allow him to receive about $3,700 a month in retirement pay. General Adams said at the time, "I am completely satisfied that this was a thorough investigation." Adams himself was ultimately allowed to retire.

With Col. Sabow's "suicide" and Col. Underwood's guilty plea, the Marine Corps was able to close the file on the scandal and to end the investigation. No further facts, therefore, were supposed to come out.

The Cover-up

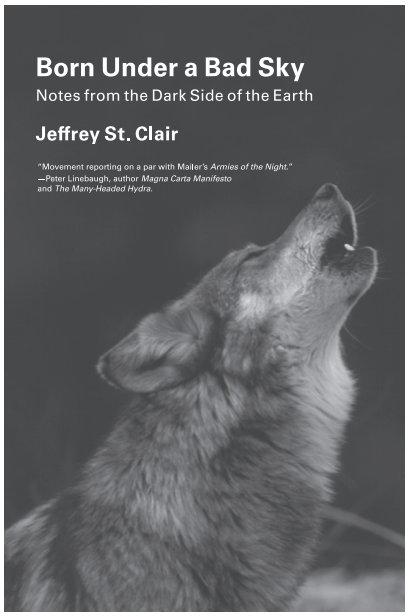
Although the Naval investigators and the Orange County coroner conducted various tests that Bryan Burnett was able to use in his investigation, his conclusion was the exact opposite of theirs. He has categorically stated in his investigative report that Col. Sabow was murdered.

In 2003, Senators Pat Leahy, Democrat of Vermont, and Charles Grassley, Republican of Iowa, then respectively the chairman and ranking member of the Senate Judiciary Committee, sent a joint letter to the FBI demanding that the investigation into Col. Sabow's death be reopened. In an amazing rebuff to the high-ranking senators, the FBI wrote back and effectively told the two senators that it had already conducted a review of the evidence surrounding Col. Sabow's death and concluded that it was suicide.

The letter from the FBI's assistant of the Office of Public and Congressional Affairs, John Collingwood, emphasized that the absence of fingerprints on the weapon was not abnormal, that rarely are fingerprints found on weapons. Further,

Born Under a Bad Sky: Notes from the Dark Side of the Earth

by Jeffrey St. Clair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Notes from the Dark Side of the Earth
Jeffrey St. Clair
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"Born Under a Bad Sky provides a sense of hope as an antidote to the despair over what humans have done to the environment."
—Paul Krassner, editor *The Realist*, author *One Hand Jerking*.

"This is what the true West looks like. It's not for the faint of heart."
—Susan Davis, author *Spectacular Nature.*

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the FBI concluded that the evidence of Col. Sabow being bludgeoned was an injury from the gunshot wound and not from the bludgeon – exactly the opposite of what Bryan Burnett and other medical experts had found.

One of Dr. Sabow's investigators was able to go to Camp Pendleton and get a look at the flight records for El Toro Marine Air Base. He learned from the records that on the morning of the murder, a shuttle helicopter landed at a remote area of El Toro's airfield somewhat close to the base housing. Witnesses said that four men dressed in civilian clothing emerged from the helicopter and crossed a vacant field toward the base housing area. Their landing spot was a far distance from the control tower but a near distance to the Sabow house.

In 2003, Dr. Sabow was able to get Republican Congressman Duncan Hunter, Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, to attach an amendment to a military authorization bill requiring the Pentagon to re-open the investigation. The Pentagon hired Dr. Jon Nordby, of Seattle, Washington, to re-investigate the killing. Nordby had been affiliated with the FBI in previous years – a history that raised a red flag with Dr. Sabow. Because of his distrust of Nordby, Sabow refused to turn over the shotgun to him: a rebuff that provided Nordby with an excuse to denounce Dr. Sabow.

Unsurprisingly, Nordby's report confirmed the military's view that Col. Sabow committed a suicide. Nordby spent a substantial amount of time in his report attempting to ridicule Dr. Sabow. One expert who consulted for the Pentagon, Dr. Vincent DiMaio, had also concluded that Col. Sabow's death was a suicide. Dr. Nordby referred to Dr. DiMaio's report, saying that DiMaio "answered Dr. Sabow's misleading and misdirected questions with the evident frustration of a knowledgeable professional too busy to baby-sit fanatics – hoof beats, think horses, not zebras."

According to his report, after Nordby took on the case for the Pentagon, he was called by Dr. Sabow, who told Nordby that he wanted to work with him. One might expect that this offer, coming from an experienced neurologist, in addition to his personal interest, might result in a positive contribution to the case. However, Nordby felt that Sabow was too emotional and that he had a predetermined outcome in mind – that his brother had been murdered. This prompted Nordby to hang up the phone during the conversation but not before he told Dr. Sabow "what I thought and what I felt about *this ignorant and biased unscientific attitude*." (Emphasis added). Nordby also included in his report, "I was neither asked to baby sit family members in this case, nor to provide psychological therapy, no matter how desperately both interventions may be needed. These activities simply do not appear in the language of my contract."

At another point in his report, Nordby responds to Dr. Sabow's statement that a number of district attorneys and detectives plus one judge had all evaluated the evidence and had stated categorically that this was an obvious homicide. Nordby's response was: "It is wise to remember that not all experts are equally expert on the same things. No one with forensic training who has examined the real evidence in this case has concluded that Col. Sabow was murdered. The physical and medical evidence points unequivocally toward suicide." Nordby received a Ph.D. degree in 1977 from the Department of Philosophy at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

Why was this Marine hero murdered? Why did the military investigators carelessly rush to judgment on how he died? Why have the Pentagon and the FBI made such great efforts to cover up the fact that he was murdered?

At the request of the Pentagon, Nordby issued a supplemental report in August 2006, which did nothing more than affirm what he had said in his initial report. There was one added feature, however. On page 23 of his supplemental report, he placed in a box the following: "The simple failure to find Osama Bin Laden in the mountains of Afghanistan in 2001 does not *by itself* mean that he was never there." Similarly, "The simple failure to find GSR [gunshot residue] on Col. Sabow's right hand in 1991 does not by itself mean that it was never there."

Neither in his report nor elsewhere does Dr. Nordby explain his comparison between (a) a person capable of moving about to avoid detection and (b) gunshot residue, which is incapable of moving about unless removed by outside forces, either by washing or by other means.

Applying Dr. Nordby's logic, the simple failure to find fingerprints on the barrel of the shotgun used to kill Col. Sabow does not by *itself* mean that they were never there.

In his new report, Dr. Nordby also makes much of what he calls "voids" on Col. Sabow's bathrobe – meaning clean areas on the bathrobe that are devoid of bloodstains. He attributes such voids to those areas having been covered by Col. Sabow's arms at the time of the shotgun blast. The drawings he made of the bathrobe in his report show that Col. Sabow's left arm certainly could have covered the left part of the bathrobe, thereby, preventing blood spatters from hitting that part of the bathrobe which his left arm apparently covered when the gun was fired.

However, Nordby exposes a major flaw in his own investigation by including his diagram of the position of Col. Sabow's right arm relative to the bathrobe, which shows the right arm coming across his chest, downward, in a position that Nordby says would allow the colonel to reach the trigger mechanism of the shotgun. In this new scenario plotted by Nordby, he would have Col. Sabow holding the shotgun *between* his legs, rather than alongside his right leg, in order to fit the location of the "void" created by his right arm across his bathrobe. Unwittingly, Dr. Nordby's diagram showing the location of the "void," or the clean area of the bathrobe covered by his right arm, specifically disproves suicide, providing even more evidence of a murder.

The suicide scenario posited by the Naval Investigative Service and the Pentagon, and not refuted by Dr. Nordby in his initial report, was that Col. Sabow was seated, with his left hand holding the muzzle of the shotgun in his mouth, the gun placed alongside and outside of his

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right leg with his right hand pulling the trigger. In this scenario, the colonel's right arm could not possibly have covered the bathrobe in the place that Nordby specifies. His arm would have been along the right side of the bathrobe, and not the front, which is where Nordby diagrams it. But to justify his suicide theory, in his supplemental report he was compelled to create a scenario where Col. Sabow held the gun between his legs, and not alongside his right leg – a shift of 180 degrees from his assumption in his first report.

Dr. Nordby seems unable to explain away the staged murder scene, the colonel's crushed skull, the neatened up bathrobe, or the absence of gunshot residue on his right hand.

Questions Not Answered, Case Not Closed

The murder of Col. Sabow, the flawed investigation by the military, and the cover-up together raise many more questions than there are answers. Why was this Marine hero murdered? Why did the military investigators carelessly rush to judgment on how he died? Why have the Pentagon and the FBI made such great efforts to cover up the fact that he was murdered?

More importantly, what are they hiding?

It is not an exaggeration to say that the Marine Corps has no interest in exposing their senior officers, nor is it a reach to understand why the military has no interest in exposing their part in illegal arms shipments or illegal drug running, even if the commander in chief had initially ordered the weapons shipments.

Whatever the reason for the cover-up, the result was the murder of a member of the United States Marine Corps who served his country honorably, as he had sworn to do, as well as a blot on the reputation of the United States military.

Footnote: For those who have a hard time believing that George H.W. Bush could be involved in covert operations, one must consider his experience. He was director of Central Intelligence in the 1970s, and was vice president during the Iran-Contra business in the 1980s. If you remember, at that time, he vehemently denied having anything to do with meeting with the Iranians with respect to trading weapons for hostages. He was, as he said, "out of the loop."

Not long after that denial, and during the Senate Foreign Relations Committee's investigation of the matter, I was contacted by a Foreign Relations Committee staff member who asked what I knew about Bush Sr's involvement. I knew nothing, but I called Beirut and talked to Bassem Abu Sharif, who was then Yasir Arafat's top aide. Abu Sharif held me to secrecy, then told me that he was present when Bush and Arafat attended a meeting in Abu Sharif's Beirut home that dealt with trading weapons for hostages.

I asked him why Arafat wouldn't make that public, as it was a hot news item at the time, and his response was that Arafat "didn't want to anger the Americans." **CP**

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